

FORT McMURRAY

Alberta's Jubilee City



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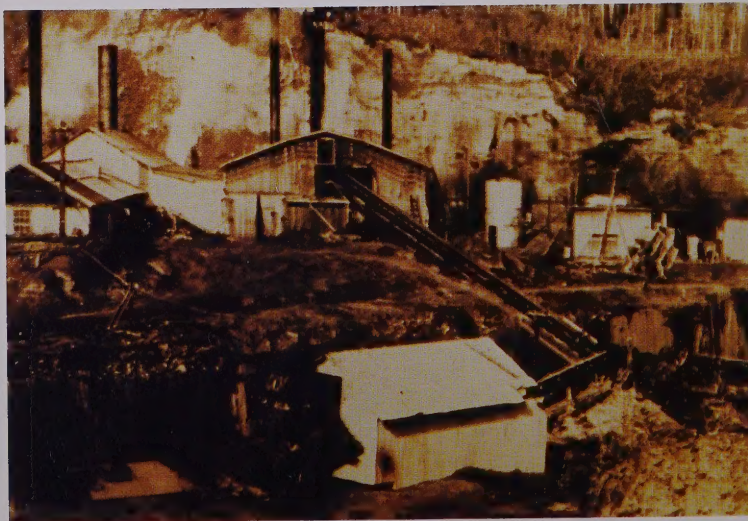
CONTENTS

History	1
People	3
A Strong Resource Base	4
Industry	6
A Transportation Centre	11
Services	14
The Spirit	22

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History

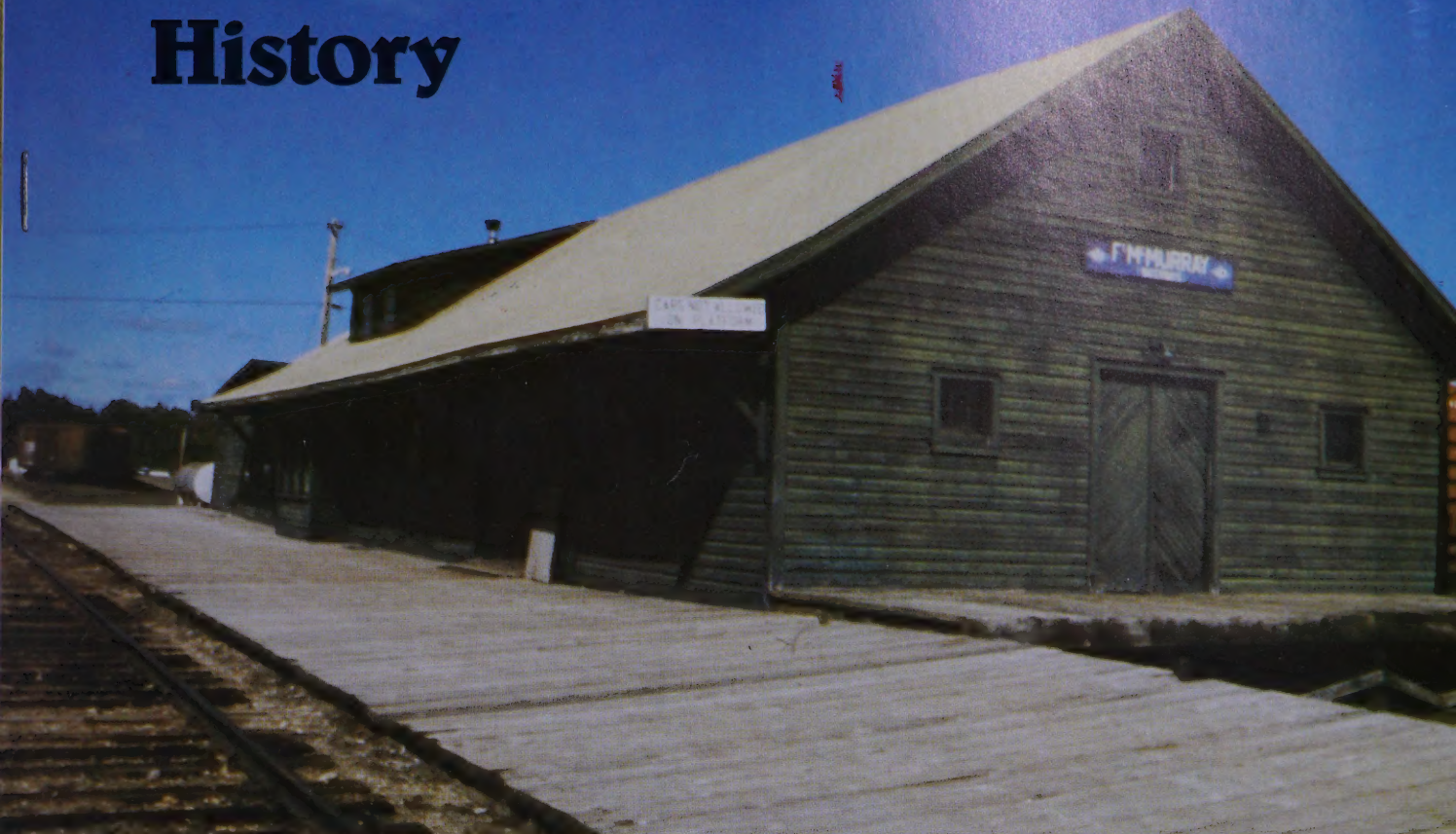


Photo courtesy of Focus Photography Ltd.

Fort McMurray — for most Canadians, the name alone is a symbol of Northern Alberta's incredible resource wealth and the ongoing development of those resources. Blessed with proximity to Alberta's vast oil sands deposits, a wide array of other natural resources, and a strategic position as the transshipment centre for points north, in Saskatchewan and down the Athabasca River, this vibrant new city has become Northern Alberta's most important regional centre.

Situated in a scenic river valley at the junction of the Clearwater and Athabasca Rivers, Fort McMurray is surrounded by a picturesque environment offering startling contrasts — wooded hilltops, deep ravines and muskeg, and numerous lakes and small rivers. Once regarded mainly as a fur-trading, hunting and fishing centre, Fort McMurray has become to Northern Alberta what the major urban centres of Edmonton and Calgary are to the province's central and southern regions.

Proclaimed a city on September 1, 1980 — coinciding with Alberta's 75th anniversary celebrations — Fort McMurray had experienced several decades of unprecedented growth as a result of its crucial role in the development of the Athabasca Oil Sands. But Alberta's Jubilee City also boasts a history — a history which spans more than two centuries and is as rich as the resources on which the city rests.

The Fur Trade

Explorer and fur trader Peter Pond became the first white man to view the current site of Fort McMurray when he travelled the Clearwater River to its junction with the Athabasca in 1778. Even at that early date, he made note that "...along the banks of this river are found springs of bitumen which flow along the ground."

Reaching the same area nearly a decade later, Alexander Mackenzie also showed interest in the oil sands, as well as the way the local Indians used the thick black oil for waterproofing canoes. However, despite the fascination shown by many of the early explorers and traders who visited the area, the existence of the oil sands was not to excite commercial interest for more than a century.

The site's original attraction was its strategic location in terms of the rich fur areas of the north. In 1790, the North West Company established a trading post on the west side of the Athabasca River, opposite the present site of Fort McMurray, and called it Fort of the Forks. The post was abandoned 50 years later when a smallpox epidemic struck.

In 1870, H.J. Moberly chose a new site on the east bank of the Athabasca, near the Clearwater River, for the construction of a Hudson's Bay Company trading post. Named in honour of Chief Factor William McMurray, who was in charge of the company's Athabasca District, the new post survived a fire and three severe floods to become the major depot on the supply route from northern Saskatchewan to Lake Athabasca via the Athabasca River.

The Early Years

With the establishment of a steamboat terminus near Fort McMurray in 1883, the area's importance as a transportation and trading centre was confirmed. Three government-sponsored geographical surveys were conducted, uncovering the region's vast resource potential, and by 1900, the area's population reached 300. The first period of development in Fort McMurray was about to begin.

The new century brought renewed interest in the oil sands. In 1906, Count Alfred Von Hammerstein drilled for

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Photo courtesy of Suncor Inc.

oil at the mouth of the Horse River, striking salt instead. During the next 11 years, he drilled a total of 24 wells, none of which were successful, but the excitement caused by the oil sands continued.

By 1914, housing and commercial real estate had jumped, the first R.C.M.P. detachment had come to town, the first school in the area had opened, the first church was built and the federal government had conducted the first technical survey of the oil sands deposit.

The idea of using oil sands as road paving material was also born during this period and quantities of the substance

were transported to Edmonton for testing. While paving with oil sands proved successful—even to its use on the Alberta Legislative Grounds—the economic factors involved in shipping the sands from Fort McMurray forced abandonment of the project.

In fact, high transportation costs and other difficulties related to the isolation of Fort McMurray in this early period were the main causes of the eventual collapse of the area's first development. Activities in the region gradually returned to the basic economy of fishing and fur trading, although growth continued at a steady rate until 1920, when the population reached 700.

The economy of the region was strengthened somewhat with the completion of the rail link from Edmonton to Waterways, adjacent to Fort McMurray, in 1925. Logging, wood cutting, a salt mining operation and the establishment of a significant fishing industry further bolstered the economy.

During the late 1920s, the area also became headquarters for such famous bush pilots as C.H. (Punch) Dickens, and W.R. (Wop) May, who flew mail, supplies and medicine to the north.

The Oil Development

In 1930, oil once more became the centre of attention when the Research Council of Alberta developed an experimental hot water oil sands extraction plant at Waterways. Six years later, Abasand Oil Ltd. built the first commercial extraction plant, with a capacity of 400 tons a day, on a site next to the Horse River. Fire later destroyed the plant.

During the Second World War, the area became home to 3,000 American troops, who completed a new railway spur between Waterways and Fort McMurray and a new road linking the airport to the town. The Northern Transportation Company took over the spur and the campsite was vacated by the troops in 1947. The three hamlets of Fort McMurray, Waterways and Prairie were incorporated as the village of McMurray the same year and proclaimed a town in 1948.

Fort McMurray's population had decreased to 900 from 4,000 with the departure of the American troops, and the real development was yet to come. In 1960 Great Canadian Oil Sands Ltd., now part of Suncor Inc., applied to Alberta's Oil and Conservation Board to extract synthetic crude oil from the oil sands.

The application was granted in 1964, the same year Fort McMurray, with a population of 1,300, was granted New Town status. Development had begun in earnest and in 1967, when the new extraction plant came on stream, Fort McMurray's population had leaped to 5,000.

By the time Syncrude Canada Ltd.'s application for construction of another oil sands extraction plant was approved in 1973, the New Town of Fort McMurray was home to 9,500 persons and facing a future of unparalleled growth and prosperity.

People

With two oil sands plants into production and construction of a third plant proposed for the area, the population of Fort McMurray had grown to more than 28,000 in September, 1980, when it was officially declared a city.

Youth, vitality and a commitment to the future are the main characteristics of that population. In 1980, the average age in Fort McMurray was only 23 years, with children making up 37 per cent of the population and persons over 50 accounting for just a small percentage.

With the development of Suncor and Syncrude, a permanent community of young families and career persons has emerged.

The employment picture has also changed significantly during recent years. From 1976 to 1980, the percentage of the labour force employed in construction dropped from 35 per cent to 15 per cent, while the percentage of the force employed in mining, manufacturing, agriculture and fishing increased from 25 per cent to 35 per cent. The service sector remained relatively stable, employing about 45 per cent of the labour force.

During the same period, the number of housing units in Fort McMurray increased by 66 per cent, with most of the population residing in single family dwellings and apartments.

A Community of Cultures

Because Fort McMurray has attracted young, enthusiastic residents from almost every region of Canada and many other parts of the world, the city is alive with a variety of different cultural groups and activities. Whether a person hails from Newfoundland, Manitoba or Southeast Asia, he or she will soon find a group of residents with similar interests and background, as well as a whole new range of experiences to explore.

Fort McMurray is also known for its strong native heritage. There are five main groups of native people in the area: the Anzac band, the Fort Chipewyan Cree and Chipewyan bands, and the people of nearby Fort MacKay, Janvier, Chard and Conklin.

Although many of the native people are still actively involved in Fort McMurray's traditional economies of fishing and trapping, they are also becoming more involved in the city's future through training programs and job opportunities offered by the major companies. A number of the city's shops specialize in native crafts, while the Nis-tawoyou Friendship Centre hosts activities geared to the native culture.

Photo left by Victor Post, courtesy of Syncrude Canada Ltd.

Photo right courtesy of Focus Photography Ltd.

Involved With the Future

The strength of the oil industry in recent years, coupled with the knowledge that further development of the oil sands could increase the city's population to 45,000 by 1986, has given rise to a firm priority for city residents — social planning.

A temporary lull in construction activity on the oil sands has eased the demand for essential services, such as housing, and given city planners the opportunity to finalize an impressive array of social, recreational and cultural services designed to reflect the general quality of life in Fort McMurray.

A General Municipal Plan, outlining the direction of Fort McMurray's future growth in terms of shelter, transportation, economics, development, conservation, education, social services, recreation, culture, and zoning has been developed, with input invited from every resident.

In fact, involvement is a key word in Fort McMurray — whether it means planning a conference on recreation development, sitting on a social services task force, or helping a new resident get adjusted through the innovative "Neighbour Aid" program.

Fort McMurray is truly a place for people — people interested in a bright economic future, a stable community life and getting involved with one another.



Photo courtesy of Focus Photography Ltd.

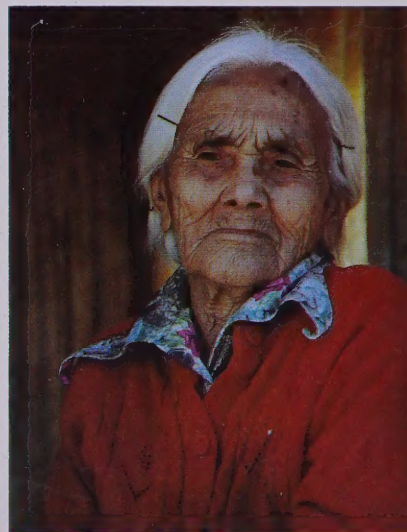
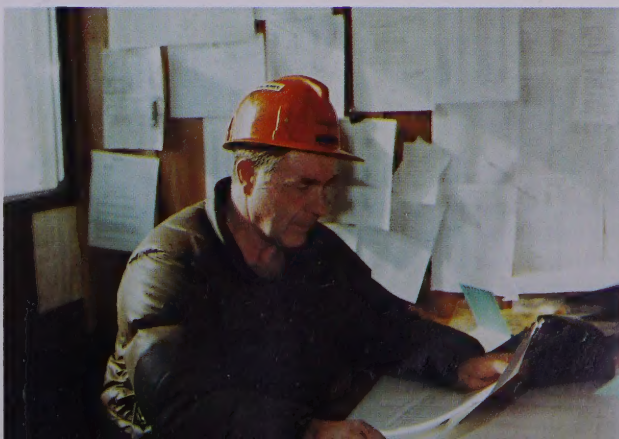


Photo courtesy of Helga Williams



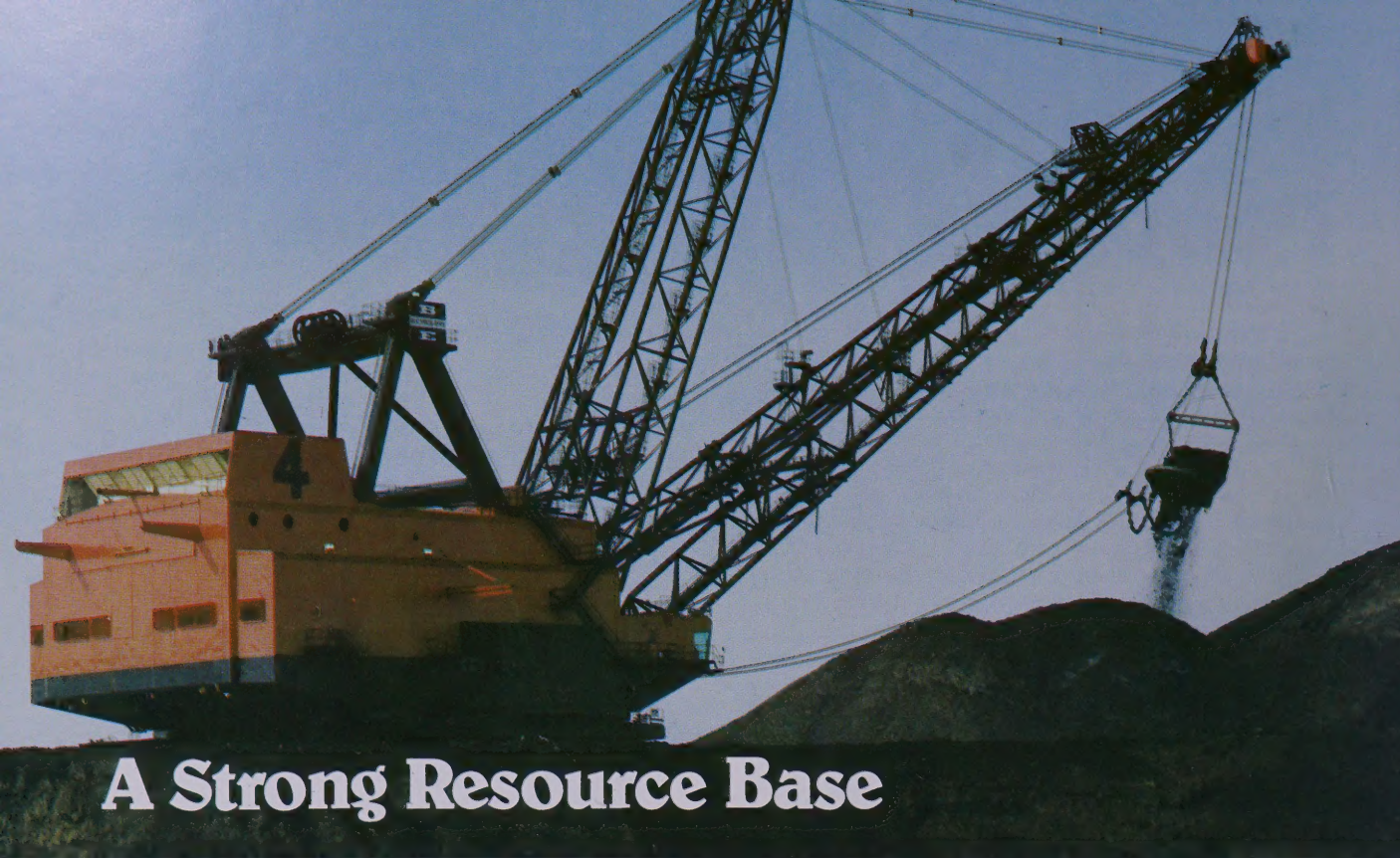


Photo by Victor Post, courtesy of Syncrude Canada Ltd.

A Strong Resource Base

Fort McMurray is literally surrounded by resource wealth — the hilltops above it, the waterways running through it and the rich land beneath it all offer potential for development. Much of that potential has yet to be tapped, but its very existence assures the city a bright and diversified economic future.

The wildlife resource in the area — fur-bearing animals, big game and a wide variety of wild birds and fish — played a strong role in the city's origins as a hunting, fishing and trapping centre. While still important, especially in terms of recreation, this resource has taken a back seat to development activity on the Athabasca Oil Sands during recent years.

In addition to the oil sands, Fort McMurray is also attracting increased attention as a source of lumber, electrical power and an impressive array of mineral resources.

The Oil Sands

The massive oil sands deposits in Alberta's north are estimated to contain 159 billion cubic metres of bitumen, or heavy oil, one third of which is recoverable. The province's four principal deposits cover approximately 58,500 square kilometres and Fort McMurray is situated on the largest, the Athabasca Oil Sands, which is also the world's largest known deposit.

Current exploitation of the deposits is being done through surface mining techniques, although a substantial amount of the deposits is buried too deep for this method. Extraction of the crude bitumen from oil sand is achieved by a hot water process developed in the 1930s by Dr. Karl A.

Clark, a scientist with the Alberta Research Council. The oil sand is mixed with hot water, steam and caustic soda and allowed to separate into bitumen product and sand and water tailings. The product of this separation process, referred to as raw bitumen, is upgraded in a refining process to synthetic crude oil.

Suncor Inc. and Syncrude Canada Ltd. are both currently producing oil from the sands near Fort McMurray, and another multi-billion dollar plant has been proposed by the Alsands Project Group, a consortium headed by Shell Canada. Since surface mining techniques can only be used efficiently in the recovery of less than 10 per cent of the reserves, a number of pilot projects in the area are exploring in-situ (mining in place) methods of extracting oil from the deeper deposits.

*** (Note: 1 cubic metre equals approximately 6.29 barrels.)**

Lumber

Sixty per cent of Alberta, or approximately 390,000 square kilometres, is covered by forest, containing more than 1.7 billion cubic metres of wood material. Fort McMurray is situated in the midst of the Athabasca Forest and is surrounded by jack pine, poplar, aspen and spruce.

The Athabasca Forest has a potential annual timber yield of 1,330,000 cubic metres of coniferous species and 880,000 cubic metres of deciduous. Fort McMurray currently has two operating sawmills — Northland Forest Products and Pelican Spruce Mills — and there is tremendous potential for development of pulp and timber mills as a major industry.

Water Resources

In addition to the five river bodies running through or near Fort McMurray — the Athabasca, Clearwater, Saline, Horse and Hangingstone Rivers — the city is also close to a myriad of water bodies, the largest being Lake Athabasca.

Water is of particular importance in Fort McMurray, not only because of its use as a means of transportation, but also because of its many domestic, recreational and industrial development uses. With demands for cheap energy increasing daily, the area is also blessed with potential for hydroelectric development.

Other Mineral Resources

The major geographic zones surrounding Fort McMurray — the Pre-Cambrian and the Paleozoic — contain an abundance of mineral resources other than the oil sands. Some of these have potential for independent development, while others are closely tied to the industrial growth associated with oil sands extraction and processing.

Coke and Sulphur

One of the by-products of oil sands production, coke, is a potential energy source, while another, sulphur, is used in the production of fertilizers. Both these products are being explored for sales.

Other Oil Sands By-products

Good grade silica sand, used for a variety of manufacturing and industrial purposes, is found in the tailings resulting from extraction of oil from the Athabasca Oil Sands. The oil sands also contain trace amounts of titanium-bearing minerals and zircon which, because they undergo a natural concentration during processing of the sands, offer possibilities for economic recovery. Vanadium and nickel are also recoverable from the fly-ash by-product of oil sands processing plants. Interest has been expressed in utilizing carbon dioxide, another by-product of oil sands processing, in in-situ mining.

Silica Sand

Silica sand is used for glass manufacturing, hydraulic fracturing and sandblasting, in foundries and for a host of minor uses. In addition to the silica sand available from oil sands production, one of Alberta's few sources of good grade silica sand is found along the Clearwater River, although neither of these sources have been developed to date.

Salt

Fort McMurray is situated on top of Alberta's vast deposits of salt, a mineral which is used directly for purposes ranging from household consumption to ice control on the roads, and which is a valuable component in the production of pulp, glass and petrochemicals. Salt was mined in the Fort McMurray area in the late 1920s and from 1937 to 1950 and offers good potential for use in the chemical industry.

Gypsum

Gypsum deposits, estimated at millions of tons, have been found beneath the Clearwater and Athabasca Rivers near Fort McMurray, as well as in the Peace Point area of Wood Buffalo National Park. Gypsum is one of the essential mineral raw materials in the manufacture of portland cement and offers good possibility for development in the Fort McMurray region.

Limestone and Clay

Both of these minerals are also essential for the manufacture of cement, and are found in quantity near Fort McMurray. Vast amounts of limestone exist in shallow flat-lying beds underlying the northeast Plains region, and are exposed along the Athabasca and Clearwater Rivers. Clays and shales, Alberta's most voluminous mineral resources, are found throughout the Fort McMurray area, including deposits of clay suitable for the production of stoneware.

Other Minerals

Gravel, granite and peat moss are some of the other minerals found near Fort McMurray. The city is also in a strategic position in terms of development of the uranium and molybdenite showings which have been found near Lake Athabasca, and is also close to the coal deposits on the Firebag Plain, which could be mined as a source of energy for an oil sands in-situ extraction plant.



Photo by Victor Post, courtesy of Syncrude Canada Ltd.



Industry

Photo by Victor Post, courtesy of Syncrude Canada Ltd.

The growth of Fort McMurray from a small frontier town to Northern Alberta's major city in just two decades is directly attributable to the oil industry's development of the Athabasca Oil Sands. Each of the two major extraction plants now operating on the sands has brought thousands of new jobs, improved the standard of living and changed the way of life in Fort McMurray. With other plants proposed for the area in the near future, the oil industry is destined to remain the main employer in the city for some time.

However, Fort McMurray's increase in population has also spawned growth of other support and service industries. As the city has expanded, so has the demand for construction of housing and recreational facilities, the provision of retail goods and services, and more of the entertainment and social amenities which make any community a better place in which to live.

The Oil Companies

Suncor Inc.

The world's first major commercial producer of synthetic crude oil from the oil sands, Suncor Inc.'s plant north of Fort McMurray has been in operation since 1967. Construction on the \$235-million plant began in 1964, requiring a work force of 2,300 at its construction peak.

Despite the many technological difficulties posed by its pioneering work on the oil sands, Suncor is now producing an average of 7,200 cubic metres, or 45,000 barrels, of oil per day.

Suncor, which has a permanent work force of 1,400 persons in Fort McMurray, has undertaken a \$185-million expansion and has another \$20 million in improvements planned for existing facilities. This will increase production and staff. During the expansion, 1,100 persons were involved in construction.

Suncor also participates in the Amoco Canada Petroleum Ltd. oil sands project, which is testing various techniques for recovering deep oil at Gregoire Lake near Fort McMurray, and has, as well, a 50 per cent interest in a thermal recovery project for heavy oil at Fort Kent in the Cold Lake area of northeastern Alberta.

Syncrude Canada Ltd.

Located near Mildred Lake, 42 kilometres north of Fort McMurray, Syncrude Canada Ltd.'s massive oil sands plant was officially opened and went on stream in the summer of 1978.

Construction on the \$2.5 billion project, the world's largest oil sands plant and one of the largest single construction projects in Canadian history, began in December, 1973, and brought approximately 8,000 workers into the area during the peak construction year of 1977.

Syncrude — a nine-member consortium — employs more than 3,200 persons in the Fort McMurray area.

The Syncrude project has a licensed capacity of 20,550* cubic metres per day. Over its expected 25-year life span, the plant is capable of producing more than 159 million cubic metres of synthetic crude oil.

*** (Note: 1 cubic metre equals approximately 6.29 barrels.)**

Photo courtesy of Adrian Van Hooydonk and Suncor Inc.





Photos by Victor Post, courtesy of Syncrude Canada Ltd.



The Alsands Project Group

A third major oil sands project in the Fort McMurray area has been proposed by a consortium of nine oil companies — Amoco Canada Petroleum Company Ltd., Chevron Standard Limited, Dome Petroleum Limited, Gulf Canada Limited, Hudson's Bay Oil and Gas Company Limited, Petro-Canada Inc., Petrofina Canada Ltd., Shell Canada Resources Limited and Shell Explorer Limited.

Under the Alsands proposal, a plant similar in scope and capacity to the Syncrude project would be built on a lease 64 kilometres north of Fort McMurray. The plant is expected to cost more than \$8 billion from initiation to start up of operations.

Construction of the project could involve a peak work force of 8,000 at the site, with an on-stream complement of 3,100 employees. The Alsands proposal includes construction of a new community of 10,000 north of the project site and the economic impact on Fort McMurray is expected to be significant.

Other Oil Sands Projects

Pilot projects exploring various techniques of extracting oil which is too deeply buried for surface mining are also being operated in various locations near Fort McMurray by Amoco Canada Petroleum Ltd., Petro-Canada Inc., Texaco Canada Ltd., Union Oil of Canada, and Gulf Canada Ltd.



Photo courtesy of Howard Morris

The Construction Industry

Construction has become the second major industry in Fort McMurray, with a high degree of activity in the provision of housing and recreational and other service facilities.

In 1980, the value of construction in Fort McMurray topped \$78 million, with residential construction accounting for \$52 million, commercial construction for \$7 million, industrial construction for \$2 million, and institutional construction for \$17 million.

Fort McMurray's population outgrew the city's Lower Townsite early in the 1970s, and residential developments are continuing to spring up on the hills surrounding the city, with even more subdivisions planned to accommodate the growth expected from continuing oil sands development.

However, the nature of residential construction in the city has changed. While \$56.5 million worth of building permits were issued for apartments and multi-unit housing in 1976, that figure had dropped to \$1.3 million in 1980, and the value of permits issued for single family and semi-detached homes increased to \$42.5 million from the \$12.5 million issued in 1976.

The nature and scope of non-residential construction in the city in recent years reflects the shift in emphasis from basic living requirements to the amenities which a young and dynamic population demands.

Projects recently completed, or in the construction stages, include a number of major hotel complexes; a \$41-million regional hospital; a major expansion of Keyano College; the MacDonald Island Recreational Complex; a number of schools and community recreational facilities; several



Photo courtesy of Ena Gwen Jones

major shopping centres; and the Provincial Courthouse and the Jubilee Centre, which will be the provincial and municipal government buildings located in the heart of the city.

The construction industry in the City of Fort McMurray employs more than 2,300 people in both full-time and part-time positions.

Other Industry

Fort McMurray has a broad range of service industries, which employ close to 45 per cent of the labor force. The city also has a small manufacturing sector, which mainly provides goods and services for the oil sands projects, as well as a fledgling agricultural and forest industry.

A number of industrial enterprises can be accommodated in MacKenzie Industrial Park, which offers a 360-acre fully serviced site.



Photo courtesy of Helga Williams



Photo courtesy of Photography North Ltd.

THEATRE
KEYANO college
FT. McMURRAY, ALBERTA





Photo courtesy of Pacific Western Airlines

A Transportation Centre

Fort McMurray's importance as a regional transportation centre dates back to the days of the first fur traders, when its waterways were utilized to access the rich fur trading areas of what was then the Northwest Territories.

Today, the city is still the transshipment centre for the barge system down the Athabasca, which serves Fort Chipewyan, Uranium City, and other outposts along the river and lakeshores. However, the city also boasts a number of other transportation links which ensure its continued prominence as the major contact centre between Alberta's southern cities and the outlying communities of the north.

Water Routes

Northern Transportation Company Ltd. has been operating a marine transportation service out of Fort McMurray for close to 50 years. Cargo is transported on the Athabasca system — consisting of the Athabasca, Slave and Peace

Rivers, as well as Lake Athabasca — for about five months each year, beginning near the end of May.

Fort McMurray's waterways also serve as recreational transportation routes for those who wish to enjoy the scenic countryside of the Athabasca area, and as a means of reaching the rich fishing waters of Lake Athabasca.

Highway 63

Highway 63, a paved all-weather road, links Fort McMurray and the surrounding areas to Edmonton, 440 kilometres to the south.

The highway is also used by a number of trucking lines which service the region; Greyhound Bus Lines, which operates a coach service three times a day between Fort McMurray and Edmonton; and the Red Arrow Express, a luxury bus service offering daily service between Fort McMurray and points south.

Fort McMurray Airport

More than 50,000 movements have been monitored annually at the Fort McMurray airport, making it one of the busiest in Western Canada. A commercial jet service operated between Fort McMurray and Edmonton several times a day by Pacific Western Airlines is complemented by private, commercial and industrial flights offered by local charter companies.

The airport is situated approximately 10 kilometres from the city and plans are underway for redevelopment of the present terminal building.

Rail Service

Work on the first railway to the Fort McMurray area from Edmonton began early in the 1900s, with the line reaching a site on the Clearwater River by 1925. Although the strong support role played by rail service in Fort McMurray's early economic development has diminished somewhat, it still plays a vital role in transporting heavy industrial freight to the area, particularly the heavy equipment needed by oil sands development projects.

Future development of mineral resources in the area can be expected to result in a growth of rail services, such as unit trains, for the transport of such materials as sulphur and coke.



Photo courtesy of Photography North Ltd.

Photo courtesy of Helga Williams





Photo courtesy of Pat Hart



Photo courtesy of Howard Morris

Photo courtesy of Photography North Ltd.



Services

Newcomers and visitors to Fort McMurray often express amazement at the range and quality of services this relatively new city has to offer. In fact, the youth of the city has been a significant factor contributing to the growth of such services.

The large number of people attracted to the community within a short period of time has resulted in a concerted effort by city planners and other concerned citizens to keep them happy, healthy and involved. This has meant the upgrading of utility, communication and other public services, and the expansion of recreational, educational and health facilities.

Each subdivision in Fort McMurray features its own support services system, capable of expansion, which provides for everything from standard underground utilities to special recreational facilities, playgrounds, commercial outlets and educational institutions.

Today, the array of services and amenities in Fort McMurray reflects its position as Northern Alberta's foremost urban centre and its anticipation of an even larger population in the future.

Government

The granting of city status in September, 1980, heralded a major change in Fort McMurray's local government. The areas of planning and finance, handled by the provincial government under the community's previous New Town status, became the responsibility of the new city council — a mayor and six aldermen.

Both the provincial and municipal government offices, as well as the Fort McMurray Public Library, will be housed in the \$17-million Jubilee Centre, the government building located in the heart of the downtown core. The Centre will include one seven-storey and one eight-storey office tower, connected by a two-storey central structure.

Also located in the downtown core, the \$4-million, two-storey Provincial Courthouse will house four court rooms, interview rooms, judges' chambers and administrative offices related to the provincial court.

Education

Fort McMurray has an extensive education system, offering instruction at all levels from kindergarten to university. The city has both public and separate school systems, each operating a number of schools.

Keyano College, a regional college based in Fort McMurray, is administered by a local board of governors. The college consists of a downtown academic campus and a separate heavy equipment facility. Continuing education courses, a wide range of trade and apprenticeship programs, heavy industrial training, and regular academic courses are all offered.

Construction on a \$21-million expansion of the college's downtown campus began in 1979 and will give the college a capacity of 1,000 students. The expansion is in three phases, with the first involving some trade shops, kitchen and dining facilities and a 590-seat theatre. The second will see completion of all trade shops and the third will include the academic facilities, labs and classrooms.

Alberta's fourth and newest university, Athabasca University, also has a learning centre in Fort McMurray. In addition to regular lecture courses, the university offers a wide range of home study courses.



Photo courtesy of Focus Photography Ltd.

Health Services

A dominant feature on the city's downtown skyline, the \$41-million Fort McMurray Regional Hospital is one of the most modern hospitals in Canada. The first phase of the hospital opened in the spring of 1980 and the facility will eventually cover 300,000 square feet.

The hospital offers excellent operating, radiology, intensive care, laboratory and out-patient facilities for residents of Fort McMurray and the surrounding areas, and also features some of the most modern hospital equipment and computerized systems found in any hospital in Canada. Built with expansion in mind, the facility has an initial usage level of 150 beds with an eventual full capacity of 300 beds.

In addition to several medical clinics and a good selection of doctors, dentists and other health practitioners, Fort McMurray residents also have a choice of social service programs offered through Preventive Social Services. A municipal agency funded by the city and the province, PSS utilizes both a full-time staff and volunteer help to provide residents with counselling services, information on how to access service agencies, homemaker and home aid services, family life guidance, transportation services for the handicapped and elderly, daycare, and crisis services.



Photos courtesy of Helga Williams





Photo courtesy of Howard Morris

Recreation

Many older, more established communities would be hard-pressed to match the recreational facilities found in Fort McMurray. The city is alive with a variety of things to do or try, and a host of places in which to try them.

More than 80 basic sporting programs, covering every possible age group and including activities ranging from archery to winter survival programs, are available through such facilities as the Family YMCA; Nistawoyou Friendship Centre; Thickwood Community Centre; Father Beauregard Educational Community Centre; and Gregoire Park Recreation Centre, to name just a few.

The city operates a public swimming pool, three arenas and several tennis courts. Other facilities include a golf course, racquet sport clubs, bowling and billiard centres, a stock car oval, and an outdoor rifle range.

By far the most impressive facility, however, is the MacDonald Island Recreational Complex. This \$3.4-million public facility, run on a user-pay basis, includes 12 curling sheets, racquet sport facilities, a nine-hole golf course which is being expanded to 18 holes, and rugby and soccer pitches.



Photos courtesy of Focus Photography Ltd.





Photos courtesy of Joe Van Haarlem



Culture

Fort McMurray's cultural and artistic offerings have managed to keep pace with the more physical pursuits in the city. Various courses in arts, crafts, dance, film, history, languages, literature, music, and assorted hobbies are available through the city's educational and recreational facilities and numerous cultural, social and ethnic organizations.



The impressive 590-seat Keyano Theatre is guaranteed frequent use by the city's live theatre groups — Theatre Unique, specializing in musicals, FM Theatre Live and the Keyano Theatre Company. Professional concerts and the Annual Music Festival are also part of the city's burgeoning cultural activities.

Always a good place to spend an afternoon, the Fort McMurray Public Library has tens of thousands of books, as well as an audio-visual equipment lending program. The library's current space will more than double with its move to the Jubilee Centre, allowing expansion of its current selection and other services.

Other Services

Churches

Ten years ago, Fort McMurray had only seven churches, but today the city has almost three times as many, with new churches being established each year. Thousands of residents, representing a number of different denominations, attend services every week.

Photo below courtesy of Helga Williams



Photo courtesy of Focus Photography Ltd.





Photo courtesy of Ena Gwen Jones

Police and Fire

Policing services in Fort McMurray and the surrounding area are provided by an RCMP detachment of more than 50 members. The city also has a modern and fully-equipped fire department, which offers paramedic and ambulance services.

Youth Assessment Centre

Fort McMurray's Youth Assessment Centre, a \$1.5-million treatment and assessment facility for delinquent youths, provides accommodation, counselling, medical and psychological services.

Media

Residents of Fort McMurray are kept well-informed and entertained by a variety of different media. The area has two local newspapers — the daily Fort McMurray Today and the weekly Fort McMurray Express — and also receives dailies from other major centres.

The city also has a local radio station, CJOK Radio, and a local cable company, ABC Cable.

Utilities and Transportation

Telephone service in Fort McMurray is supplied by Alberta Government Telephones, which recently completed a \$1.8-million expansion that is expected to meet the needs of the city and surrounding area until the late 1980s. Electricity is provided by Alberta Power and natural gas by Northwestern Utilities. Fort McMurray also has complete water, sewer and sanitation facilities.

The city's public transit service provides transportation between the city's many residential subdivisions and the downtown core.

Financial Institutions

Branches of most major Canadian chartered banks are found in Fort McMurray, as well as several credit unions and a number of insurance, trust, finance and mortgage companies.

Shopping

Fort McMurray is a shoppers' delight, with a full range of goods and services obtainable. Retail outlets, ranging from major department stores and supermarkets to small boutiques and speciality stores, are found throughout the city. Two large shopping malls — the Downtown Mall, with 45 stores, and Park Plaza II, with 34 stores, — have been completed, and another major mall is in the preliminary development stages.

Entertainment, Food and Accommodation

Numerous food outlets operate in Fort McMurray, including everything from fast food chains to sophisticated restaurants rivalling anything found in Alberta's other cities.





Photo courtesy of Focus Photography Ltd



First-class hotel accommodation is increasing each year, and the city has 800 rooms in more than a dozen different facilities. Fort McMurray also has ample meeting and convention space, ranging from smaller meeting rooms to facilities with a 600-person capacity.

Fort McMurray's exciting night life includes live entertainment at several locations. The city also has two movie theatres and a drive-in theatre.



Photo courtesy of Howard Morris



Photo courtesy of Ron Crudge and the Peter Pond Hotel



Photo courtesy of Howard Morris

The Spirit

Resource development was responsible for the growth of Fort McMurray, but the quality of life in the city was determined by residents themselves, through their strong community spirit, desire for involvement, and keen appreciation of the surrounding natural beauty.

Activity and organization have become key words to city residents, who have successfully transformed an industrial development centre, composed of people from across Canada and around the world, into a cohesive and stable community.

The city boasts more than 100 different clubs and organizations, catering to the entire spectrum of age groups, and representing a wide variety of ethnic, professional, church and community service activities.

The population has also been active in organizing various sporting activities and special events, and has been instrumental in ensuring that the region's lovely recreation areas are accessible for the enjoyment of both local residents and visitors.

Organized Sports

Whatever the season, sporting events of every kind are likely to be going on somewhere in Fort McMurray. The city has organized teams in curling, hockey, fastball and a number of other sports, as well as individual athletes in such areas as swimming, track and field, wrestling and cross-country skiing, who participate in events held throughout the province.

Community Events

There's no excuse for not getting together in Fort McMurray, since every season is heralded with its own special event.

It all begins with the Winter Carnival, held in the first weekend in March, which is marked by stock car racing on ice, King and Queen of the North competitions, dog sled racing and numerous other winter-time activities.

A less formal, but no less anticipated event, is the annual spring break-up on the Athabasca River. Community residents do their best to outguess Mother Nature and outwit one another as to the exact time and date the break-up begins.

Next, it's June's Midsummer Madness, where carnival activities, sidewalk sales and general celebration of summer take first priority.

Heritage Days, a weekend tribute to Fort McMurray's culture, is held in August at the city's Heritage Park and the wearing of traditional costume is popular. Residents partake in ethnic foods and participate in cultural events and arts and crafts exhibitions.

Three days of festivities at the beginning of September take hold of the city with the staging of the annual Blueberry Festival. A tradition in Fort McMurray since 1966, the festival features such attractions as a parade, the Miss Blueberry Pageant, a daily blueberry pancake breakfast, raft races on the Clearwater River, a car rally, fireworks, baseball tournaments, contests, a midway and beer fests.

The Folk Arts Festival, held in October, brings together the city's 75 ethnic organizations in a multi-cultural exposition which is enjoyed by the entire community.

Throughout the year, a Farmers' Market is held at the MacDonald Island Recreation Complex, attracting produce and crafts people from the surrounding area.

Tourism

Tourism is on the upswing Fort McMurray, with thousands of visitors registering annually.

There are a variety of things to see and do in the area, including a stop at the Suncor viewpoint; a visit to the nearby communities of Fort MacKay and Anzac; enjoying a picnic near any of the rivers in the area; and visiting Fort McMurray's Heritage Park, which houses historical buildings, equipment and other items from the city's past.

The wilderness surrounding the Fort McMurray area offers fine opportunities for activities ranging from hiking, berry-picking and nature photography to canoe trips, fly-in fishing and big game hunting. The area is noted for its excellent moose hunting and is a fisherman's paradise, offering lake trout, arctic grayling, great northern pike, walleye (pickerel), rainbow trout and perch. A majority of Alberta's trophy fishing lakes are in close proximity.

Lion's Park, located close to Heritage Park, offers barbecue pits and swimming, while the city's Centennial Park provides a number of camping sites. Numerous other camping and picnic sites are found in the area, including Gregoire Lake Provincial Park, the Anzac picnic area and boat launch, Loon Lake, Maqua Lake and the Hangingstone River Campsite.

Tourists can easily obtain information about the wealth of activities and sights in Fort McMurray and the surrounding areas through the city's Tourist and Convention Bureau and Chamber of Commerce.

The Tourist and Convention Bureau operates a tourist information centre and promotes the city through such activities as distribution of a calendar of events. The Bureau has

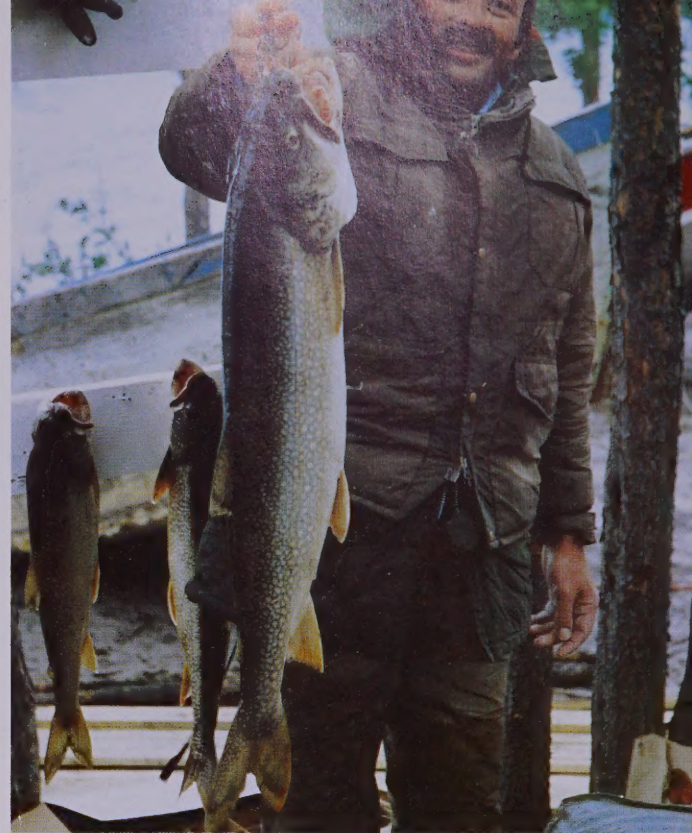


Photo courtesy of Forrest Lake Lodge

also been instrumental in launching new activities, such as the sports and trade show held annually in May.

Fort McMurray's Chamber of Commerce actively promotes the views of the city's business community on such issues as diversification of industry and development of secondary manufacturing. The Chamber hosts government delegations and special dignitaries, while working for its members on a local, provincial and national level.

Newcomers to Fort McMurray, potential residents and visitors alike, have found the warmth, friendliness and active interest of the city's residents to be one of its major attractions — one which either convinces them to stay, or keeps them coming back.

For more information on Fort McMurray, please contact:

1. **Business Development Commission**
Fort McMurray City Hall
42 Reidel Street
Fort McMurray, Alberta T9H 3E1
Telephone: 743-1000
2. **Fort McMurray Chamber of Commerce**
16-1-Tolen Drive
Fort McMurray, Alberta T9H 1G7
Telephone: 743-3100
3. **Fort McMurray Tourist and Convention Bureau**
Box 5567
Fort McMurray, Alberta T9H 3G6
Telephone: 791-4336
4. **Fort McMurray City Hall**
42 Reidel Street
Fort McMurray, Alberta T9H 3E1
Telephone: 743-1000
5. **Suncor Community Relations**
10014-B Franklin Avenue
Fort McMurray, Alberta T9H 2K6
Telephone: 743-6870
6. **Syncrude Public Affairs**
200-9911 MacDonald Avenue
Fort McMurray, Alberta T9H 1S7
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